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Devoted to the advancement of a religion that is free, spiritual and universal as contrasted with the religions that are creed-bound, traditional and sectarian.

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"I make bold to say that we who are now living will behold—nay, may already behold—the dawn of the day of a new religion which is to be really universal in its principles and as broad as humanity in its boundaries; which is not, however, to be Christianity, nor Judaism, nor Buddhism, nor neo-Brahmanism, but a new faith into which the specific religions are in form to die that they may continue to live in spiritual substance."—WM. J. POTTER.

CONTENTS

The Theistic Faith and its Foundations—Charles Voysey, M. A.
Spencer's Services to Religion—Alfred W. Martin.
The Power of the Congregation—John W. Roberts.
The Dover Decree—A correction—James W. Bartlett.
Poem—The Nobler Part
Editorial—Wise Men from the East.
Notes from the Field—Tacoma.

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NOTE.

As indicated on the title page of this number, our monthly now assumes an international character. The appeal to foreign friends of our movement for co-operation has been most unanimously met, enabling us to enhance the value and enlarge the scope of our official organ. Though small in size and comparatively limited in circulation it yet fulfils a function and accomplishes a purpose not represented by any other publication. Denominational papers, popular periodicals have their respective aims but these differ fundamentally from the aim of this monthly. Uncompromised freedom of thought in religion, the frank and fearless application of the scientific method to all the various problems of ethics and religion, a genuine catholicity and cosmopolitanism in religious fellowship untarnished by any excluding name or creed or preamble, it is for these high and holy interests that our paper stands and they constitute an adequate justification for its existence in the field of religious literature. We hope to present our readers, in each monthly issue, with an article from one or another of the collaborators whose services we are privileged to have.

THE THEISTIC FAITH AND ITS FOUNDATIONS.

By Charles Voysey, M. A., Minister of the Theistic Church, London, England.

As the object of this paper is to set forth the beliefs of Theism and the foundations on which it is built, the writer must forego the interesting subject of the rise and growth of Theism in the last century. Suffice it to say that it has spread enormously as a religion and has developed a form of worship peculiar to itself and is now represented by The Theistic Church, which has been steadily growing for over thirty years. Theists claim for their religion that it is both a Science and a Religion; that it is, like any other Science, based upon facts alone, upon facts so certain that they are never in dispute, and Theists claim also that the inferences drawn from those facts are legitimate and reasonable. In order to make the foundation of Theism more clear to the reader, it will be necessary to contrast it with the foundations of all so-called "Revealed Religions." Under the term "Revelation" is generally implied an external Divine authority carrying with it a moral obligation to accept it. It is presented under various forms, such as Bible, Church or Christ, but each is regarded by its respective votaries as divine and authoritative. That it is reasonable to reject such authorities is at once seen by their incoherent and conflicting statements, by manifest errors and contradictions, which one need not stop to enumerate because the rival Churches and Sects in turn bring railing accusations against each other. All alike claim the divine authority and infallibility for their own revelation while denying those qualities to all the rest. An earnest enquirer has still before him the stupendous task of discovering which out of them all is God's true Revelation. Further, supposing there had been only one such claimant in the world, it would still have to appeal to the human mind, conscience and heart before it could be accepted as true, and even then it would be more than difficult to prove its purely Divine origin. Theists, among others, in these days of devout criticism, have discovered errors in all the three sources of "divine revelation" which I have named. But what chiefly led to their revolt are the moral blemishes so obtrusively apparent. The revelation in every case dishonours and even blasphemes God, and, in spite of some sublime precepts, is frequently stained by setting forth rewards and punishments as motives for conduct. "God's word," as the Bible is called, "the Church of Christ," and "Jesus, the Incarnate God," are all alike now discredited as infallible authorities, and that mainly on moral grounds. No longer can any one or

all of them together be reasonably or conscientiously accepted as "Divine and infallible Revelation."

Determined to find some truth concerning God, the Theist turns from the alleged Words of God to the very Works of God, to the things which He has obviously created or evolved, and looking around and within him, he sees the varying values of those objects; some are higher, some are lower in his estimation as a rational human being. Within his very self he discerns the varying values of his mind and his body and instinctively knows that the most precious truth about God can only be drawn from a study of what is really highest and best within reach of his observation and experience. He thus arrives at the undisputed fact that the Reason, Conscience and Love in man are (among God's works) the highest objects of his knowledge and thought. In these he makes his search. Upon these he bestows his most ardent study. And these he can trust as teachers, because they are certainties of his own nature and are corroborated by the testimony of every other sane human being. They are facts which are never in dispute. Out of these facts he draws certain inferences concerning that Being—whom we call God—from whom these faculties are derived. Here the only person who can raise an objection is the Atheist who denies that our faculties are derived from any conscious being at all. But he can only logically make such a denial by also denying that the universe, including man, required any intelligence to produce or has any intelligent purpose to fulfil. At the moment of this fresh denial, he flatly contradicts the whole world of modern Science, which has placed on immovable foundations the fact that purpose and plan are everywhere manifested throughout creation. Moreover there can be no purpose without a will and a mind. Wherever purpose is discernible, there must be a reasonable Being to originate it. If a given purpose be carried out through changes of structure or other process which cannot be effected by the subjects of those changes themselves, then and there we are brought face to face with the operations of an intelligent Being, distinct from the subjects of the change and absolutely above them as creator and ruler. In this way alone, if there were no other, the Atheist is absolutely refuted. So far, the Theist has drawn the inference from his own faculties that there is a God from whom those faculties are derived. In order to complete the Theistic Faith which he will build upon them it is necessary for him to postulate, or, as some would say, to lay down as an axiom, that God must be at least as wise and good and loving as the best of men, and as the best of the best of men can imagine. It is reasonable to believe this, first because we

see that God's power and skill and knowledge are infinitely greater than our own; and secondly because by instinct we cannot think of a God below our highest standard of goodness and love. If the smallest moral blemish were discernible in God, it would destroy him. If He were not good He would not be "God" to us at all, but a "Devil." If He were well-meaning, but incapable, our trust would be destroyed. There is no possibility of faith or worship towards a Being inferior to ourselves or to our highest conceptions. It is, therefore, on these two grounds perfectly reasonable to affirm that if there be a God, he must at least be equal to the best and highest that can be imagined. How much better and higher than that we cannot tell. It may be the essence of everlasting joy to find out more of His perfections every day and hour. An ancient Theist wrote, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord. But as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah lv., 8, 9.) This axiom or postulate "God must be at least as good as the best of His creatures can conceive" enables us to attack the so-called "Divine Revelations" on moral grounds, and then enables us to draw the highest inferences from the facts of our own faculties.

The existence of God being proved, the next step is to infer from our Reason that He is intelligent and that everything is known to Him. Wherever the insatiable and indefatigable mind of man penetrates he meets with fresh evidences of the Omnipresent mind. Whenever a "law of Nature" is discovered and formulated it is simply a record of what God has done or is doing or will do. We are simply exploring a region of seemingly boundless and inexhaustible knowledge possessed by Him who had been there before us and had prepared these marvels for our reverent delight. And every part of His realm which we have explored reveals such stupendous wisdom and forethought that the more we see, the more we trust Him and the more readily we suspend our judgment of some problems of His moral discipline which we cannot yet explain. Anyway, the Theist is persuaded by his own faculty of Reason that its author is wise beyond our highest thoughts, and that He sees and knows individually every object in the whole universe. On this head must be recorded a caution: the Theist does not concern himself with the mode of God's existence or with the mode of His relation to the material world; such speculations, in his opinion, being outside his religious belief, absolutely unscientific and probably unknowable.

(To be concluded in the next number.)

SPENCER'S SERVICES TO RELIGION.*

By Alfred W. Martin.

The first important service rendered by Herbert Spencer to religion was his advocacy and exemplification of intellectual modesty. Surely it was for lack of this virtue more than for anything else that religious intolerance, persecution and killing were made possible. We need the spirit of doubt to maintain charity and justice in religion and to prevent the committing of those crimes of which religion has always been guilty when untempered by the spirit of doubt. If Samuel and Elijah had possessed some of Spencer's spirit of doubt and not been so positively certain they knew what Yahweh wanted, the former would not have exterminated the Amalekite nation nor would the latter have put to death four hundred and fifty prophets of a different deity. It was a great day for Israel when she lost some of this certainty. The loss was a decided gain, witness the gospel of the second Isaiah with its stinging rebuke to those who think they know so much about the ways and thoughts of the Almighty. "His ways are not our ways neither are His thoughts our thoughts." A little later came Job with his splendid satire and censure of those who fancy they know the nature and dwelling place of the Most High. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" Again, if Christian persecution and inquisition from Nero down had possessed this virtue of intellectual modesty, all the sufferings associated with their decrees and the deaths in which they ended might have been avoided and the result been infinitely more honorable to God. In so far then as Mr. Spencer preached and practiced the spirit of doubt, represented Agnosticism as an attitude of mind, he rendered a great service to the cause of religion. As an attitude Agnosticism means intellectual modesty and as such it is a virtue to be cultivated, a mental quality to be cherished as long as man lives. It is only as a philosophy that Agnosticism comes under the ban of condemnation because as such it means intellectual despair and the one unpardonable sin of the intellect is to despair of itself. Noble and sweet is the temper which in all modesty says of a metaphysical question "I do not know," but unworthy and ignoble is the temper which adds "and you do not know and nobody can ever know." And this is the position of Agnosticism as a philosophy.

A second service of Spencer to religion was his demonstra-

*Part of a discourse on "Spencer's Creed" spoken before the Seattle Society for Universal Religion, January 3, 1904.

tion of the indestructibility of religion, and this in the face of all the fear and trembling of thousands who, as they watched the revolution in religious thinking, fancied religion would be destroyed. Spencer demonstrated that while some religions are dead and others dying, religion itself can never die because it is an essential element of universal human nature, because it consists essentially in the effort of man to become adjusted to his environment, to get into right relations with the universe.

A third service was the demonstration of the inspiring doctrine of the ascent of man as opposed to the discouraging doctrine of the fall of man. Spencer demonstrated that the "fall" of man is a fiction, that he has been on this earth for not less than 100,000 years, during which time he has been slowly ascending, evolving from a low, crude beginning up to ever higher altitudes of character, the process of physical evolution once completed, continuing on the psychical plane and evolving a type that is to come within ever nearer distance of the divine. In such a theory of man—and it has been demonstrated beyond all refutation, taking its place by the side of gravitation, the rotundity of the earth and other established truths of the cosmos —in such a theory there is inspiration, hope, courage. And if it be said that we must necessarily feel ashamed of having had the ape and jelly fish for ancestors my reply is that I would rather be ashamed of such ancestors than have an alleged perfect ancestor, Adam, ashamed of me.

Once more, Mr. Spencer rendered a great service to religion by his demonstration of "the one most certain item of our knowledge," namely the fact that "we live in the presence of an infinite and eternal Energy whence all things proceed." By this demonstration Spencer furnished a scientific starting point from which to construct the new Theism of the new day.

Lastly by his discovery, definition and interpretation of the law of evolution, Spencer gave to religion a conception absolutely vital to its persistence and influence. But for the fact that we live in a universe of law we could not know anything whatever, could not count on our actions producing expected effects from given causes under fixed conditions, could not succeed in the task of self-adaptation to environment, or the getting into right relations with the universe. To know, to have a demonstration such as Spencer has given us in his "Synthetic philosophy" of the law of evolution and its universality constitutes one of the most helpful of convictions that ever blessed mankind and this we owe to the genius of Herbert Spencer who in 1858 gave it clean cut and genuinely scientific expression and demonstration.

THE POWER OF THE CONGREGATION.*

By John W. Roberts.

To begin with let me say that by the word 'congregation' in my subject I do not wish to raise the question of there being any distinction between clergy and laity. I include in the word all who are in any way identified with or interested in religious institutions. And the 'power' I have in mind is that simple power we all possess, the power of taking sides. And my ambition at this time is limited to the hope of saying something which may lead us again to take a deeper interest in the tweedledums and-dees of religious beliefs.

But at the outset we are confronted with a couple of false ideals holding our souls captive which we must get rid of at the very start. The first consists of the belief that religious truth itself is something which can get along without the help of man. Only recently an eminent divine among us congratulated the Unitarian church on the fact that it was connected with no man's theory and therefore had nothing to fear from the destruction of such theories now going on in this critical age. Whether his words should be taken as implying anything more than that simple trust in providence in which we all take refuge when baffled by the perplexing problems of this world I am not quite sure. Undoubtedly it is a comfort to feel that beneath and above this finite world of trouble there is an infinite God who is able to make amends for our weaknesses and overrule our blind decisions. We all know something of what it means to say "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world." But we must not forget also that providence means the interventions of the divinities and these interventions often take the form of personal convictions in human souls. But let this pass. A less uncertain source of this belief that religious truth does not depend upon human agencies is that scepticism which has been bred into us by the war waged against the creeds. There has been much justice in this war. We are surely depressed that our fellow creatures should have been so much stirred over such insignificant trifles as have separated them into various churches and sects—into a Roman church and a Greek church; into a Catholic church and a Protestant church; into the various sectarian, evangelical churches—Congregationalist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist and what not. We get little edification out of reading those endless disputes about the origin of Christ, —whether he was of the same substance or of similar substance

*Part of a discourse delivered before the Unitarian North Middlesex, Conference, June, 1898.

with God. We find little to interest us in the controversy over grace and free will, whether man can save himself or whether he must look to another for his salvation. We can have nothing but disgust for those long, technical theological words, such as pneumatology, sotereology, sacramentology, ecclesiology, eschatology, etc. And while in this mood we are not at all surprised that so many great and good men have become impatient with all attempts at formulating religious beliefs; that James Freeman Clarke, for example, should have charged up all the errors in orthodoxy to the account of theological formulation; and that Herbert Spencer should have placed the essence of religion where formulas and creeds could never reach it—in the Unknowable. Surely if men have made such sorry work in trying to know anything about God in the past an unknowable God with the religious scepticism it implies will in the future save us from similar disastrous results. Nevertheless we must not forget that a creed is nothing after all but the work of man's hands. And as many of you know there is at least a tradition in this Unitarian body that human nature is not totally depraved and that the works of man's hands are not to be despised. Even the creed-makers, the perverse theologians, philosophers, and speculative thinkers are human and may have something good in them. And while it may be true that in the past men have failed in thinking about God and formulating their thoughts into human speech there is still a chance for success in the future. And to deny this is, it seems to me, tantamount to reaffirming the doctrine of total depravity.

And finally the doctrine of human impotence has gained a great deal of strength of late from the brilliant triumphs of science. In the scientific world it is true that human power has nothing to do in supporting truth. In that sphere matters go on of their own accord. And there is much to admire in the loyalty exhibited by nature's obedience to scientific laws. What wonder then that religion which has been so unsuccessful in the past should emulate science! Her magnificent achievements have led us to suspect that similar triumphs may be ours if we only adopt her presupposition that truth is independent of human powers. And there is one department of religion where, in a large measure, this suspicion has been prophetic. The achievements of Biblical criticism, for example, have been made possible by the belief that the scientific law of uniformity holds good in past history. On the hypothesis that miracles can take place that department of work could not be carried on at all. If, for instance, it were possible for a man to relate the events and incidents connected with his own death and burial, then

Moses might be the author of the Pentateuch. That this and similar things are impossible in a natural world is the fundamental assumption of the science of Biblical criticism. And I am far from denying that in science truth is independent of human power and I cordially accept the assumption of Biblical criticism that a man can not relate the story of his own death and burial. But what I wish to call your attention to is that such scientific truth does not constitute all the truth there is to be known. Our life deals with other things as well, truths with which natural science has nothing to do. And I feel that there are matters more important than the convicting of the editors of the Bible of bearing false witness. To illustrate what I mean take the story of Dr. Bushnell as quoted in Mr. Crowe's Saratoga address of 1897. As there related the story is, as you may remember, that a certain "man was on trial for the crime of forgery. The prosecuting attorney could not clinch his case. But while making a lame and labored plea, holding the note in his hand, he brought it up between his eyes and the light, and saw a water-mark, the name of a manufacturing company which he happened to know was not organized until after the date of the note. That clinched it." Yes, and if our only business in this life consisted in prosecuting forgers, we would be right in yielding our hearts unreservedly to a law which made such prosecutions successful. But convicting forgers is not our only business, though these forgers be as old as the editors of the Pentateuch. And there is something even more valuable than the clinching of arguments by the water-marks of history. I dare say that you would all willingly admit it to be a far nobler work to influence our would-be forger by such high motives as would make it forever impossible for him to commit the crime.

Thus neither our joy in prosecuting literary forgers, nor our hatred of creeds, nor our trust in Providence ought to force upon us the false belief that we have nothing to do with religious truth and that religion like science is something that we can acknowledge and confess but which we can do nothing to create or destroy.

The other false ideal to be got rid of is the belief that in religion the congregation can be nothing but good or bad imitators of a fixed ideal example. In the old Calvinistic scheme the fixed ideal assumed the form of scriptural infallibility. The Bible with its Paradise and sinless Adam furnished us the perfect model to which we all ought to conform our lives. But it is not this sort of Calvinism that disturbs now-a-days. In our new theologies and new orthodoxies the ideal example has taken on another form. It has passed from Paradise to Nazareth, from

Adam to Christ. But I seriously question whether the ideal of humanity be not yet a desideratum, something still to be found out. And I can think of no adequate explanation of the great tragedies that now go on in this life but the belief that here and now the ideal of humanity is being determined. There seems to be something more at stake than the mere copying of an ideal. We seem to be creating the ideal itself.

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And now having got rid of these false ideals let us come to our immediate subject. What I propose to maintain is that the congregaton has a relation to religious truth that is vital and essential. It consists in the power to decide what the ideal religious truth is ultimately to be. And this decision must be made in turn by taking sides for or against some of the various religious faiths and beliefs which from time to time make their appeals to our loyalty.

And to this end the first thing for us all to realize is that there are such things as unsettled and doubtful questions in the world. I need not, I trust, waste many words to convince you of this. Take for example some of the secular questions, the question as to the nature and province of human government. What sort of government is the true government, a monarchy or democracy? Surely this is not yet a settled question. And what is the true province of government—shall it be simply an umpire of the game of life or shall it become one of the players? And if it enters the game which part shall it play? Shall it champion industry, education or religion? Shall it own the ways of travel, the railways and the highways? Or take the social questions, the philanthropic question, the criminal question, and the labor question. Which is the best way to deal with enforced poverty so as not to encourage idleness? Shall our penal institutions be for punishment or reformation, shall the congestion of the labor market be relieved from below or from above, shall we shorten the hours of labor or shall we withdraw the superior men and women from manual occupations to the higher callings and professions? And if so are we willing to add to the grosser physical wants, the higher, more intellectual and spiritual ones which alone can make such a scheme of relief practicable? I need hardly mention the religious questions, for the list is literally endless. What is the history of Christianity, of its creeds and churches, of its sects and denominations but the history of religious questions? What is the essence of your own Unitarian faith but the story of what certain men and women believed about these questions? And who can overlook the fact that we have our own living religious problems? There is the Sunday ser-

vice problem. Shall this service consist of nothing but preaching and praying, reading in concert and singing, or shall we adopt a richer liturgy, one which will develop the intellectual and moral powers and aptitudes now slumbering in the congregations? And what of our Sunday schools? Shall they have trained teachers, and shall Sunday school teaching be made a profession to which young men and women may look forward as a life career? And if so shall our Sunday schools have command over the time of its pupils, or shall we continue to act as if arithmetic, reading, and spelling were the only things important enough to compel a child to learn? Then come the more theoretical religious questions, less physically urgent perhaps, but by no means less important. There is the question of faith and infidelity. Are our passional and emotional powers which constitute the essence of our personality to be trusted in what they tell us about the ultimate nature of the world? Or are we to distrust every affirmation of the heart and act as if our deepest feelings had no voice in deciding what we shall think and believe? And if we decide to trust our heart at all which of the many voices shall we heed? Shall we believe in a personal God or in an impersonal force? And if we believe in God at all, what is the character of that God? Is he mericiful or merciless? Is his main purpose to save souls or to carry out to the letter some preordaind plan? Has He created men and women for the superficial purpose of ultimately beholding in their countenances the reflected image of His own face, or did he not in the act of creation literally part with some of his own essential attributes and shall be forever without them unless we honor his trust and develop those divine powers?

These are examples enough, I hope, to convince the most obstinate among us that such things as unsettled questions really exist. But the more difficult task yet awaits us. It is not the existence of such things as unsettled questions that we find it hardest to believe in. Our worst difficulty is in believing that these unsettled questions are really important. And this difficulty is aggravated very much at the present time by the fact that there is a strong popular current flowing in the opposite direction.

You all guess to what I refer. Living as we are in the very midst of international congresses and interdenominational ministerial unions, we need no seer to tell us that these unions draw their inspiration from the belief that religious distinctions and differences are not important and ought to be overlooked and ignored. But lest we may think that our modern union movements are original with the present generation let me recall a

little bit of history upon this very point. I might go back to the pre-christian ages, to the pantheisms and theosophies of the far East, but for the sake of simplicity I confine myself to a time well within the memory of many of us and to our country. It was James Freeman Clarke who first tried to teach the liberal church of America that it ought to lay its foundations upon re semblances and similarities and not upon distinctions and differences. And to this end he compared the beliefs of the various sects of christendom, sought out the things they hold in common, named these the essentials of Christianity, and fomulated them into a creed which he forthwith called the creed of christendom. Others inspired by Dr. Clarke's example carried the comparison beyond the limits of christendom. They brought in the so-called ethnic religions, Brahminism, Buddhism, Mahomedanism, the Brahmo Somaj etc., compared these in turn with Christianity, sought out their resemblances and formulated their common elements into a creed called the creed of Humanity. And in order that there might be nothing which could possibly take up any tenable position outside of this monistic religious creed, the President of the Free Religious Association in his address of 1871 added to the religious comparison the comparisons of all the departments of human life. To quote his own words, he said that the aim of the Free Religious Association was "to reconcile religion with all other great interests of life and to show that they are one; to prove and to make perfectly clear to all men the identity of religion and science, religion and philosophy, religion and literature, religion and art, religion and music,—the perfect compatibility—may I not say the identity?—of religious life and principle with all the great stirring activities that impel men to build themselves into great and nobler forms of civilization." Surely after a statement so sweeping and so impregnably inclusive as this there was no chance for much further originality. And our modern congresses and religious unions must content themselves with being nothing but imitations of these illustrious examples of earlier days.

Now I will not cavil at one of the facts. I cordially admit that there are ideas common to all the Christian creeds and that these ideas are what Dr. Clarke tells us they are—"belief in one God, one church universal, one immortal life, and one Holy Spirit." I will not dispute Samuel Johnson's statement that Christainity resembles the old ethnic religions and that the resemblances consist in "the unity of God, fate and freedom, and the solution of these by prayer and progress; in the unity of man with God; in scarifice and atonement; in inspiration and incarnation; in immortality; practical duties and humanities." I

will not deny that in certain respects religion resembles "all the great stirring activities that impel men to build themselves into grander and nobler forms of civilizaton." But what I do deny —and that emphatically—is that these resemblances are more important than the differences which they have huddled out of sight. And while saying this I am not unmindful of the great benefits which our congresses and unions have been to the cause of religious toleration. They unquestionably have done noble work in destroying sectarian bigotry and arrogant dogmatism. Men and women who once were kept apart by hate and bitter jealousies have been brought together into friendly fraternities. Though I doubt if even this noble service can be traced to the doctrine of resemblance as its true cause. Genuine toleration, it seems to me, can never be brought about upon such terms. It is foolish for us to talk about tolerating people who agree with us. The very notion of toleration implies that there are differences to be tolerated and in religion these differences are the beliefs which we ourselves do not hold. And when it becomes necessary to convince a man that he essentially agrees with me in order to make him tolerant toward me, the genuineness of such tolerance may be fairly doubted. It is the man who while burning to white heat with a conviction radically different from mine yet shows deference and respect to mine that shows true tolerance. And the more the chances and reasons are that I may be right, the more genuine is his spirit of tolerance. It is by holding one faith in the face of the fact that another has the very best opportunity to succeed that the worth of our religious tolerance is fairly tested. And it was of this power of believing where it is really possible to doubt that Tennyson was thinking when he sang:

"There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds."

But the doctrine of resemblance tries to banish honest doubt altogether from our religious life. It founds fellowship and fraternity on the things we hold in common. And so it is not at all surprising that even within the liberal church we sometimes find a great deal of that intolerance characteristic of sectarian bigotry. We have not learned how to believe where honest doubt is possible. We have been taught to ignore the differences and respect nothing but common universal truths.

But let us grant that comparisons of religions have performed a service to religious toleration yet there are other deeper reasons why these movements of union through resemblance should now be checked in their influence. In the first place to

ignore the differences and divergencies which lie at the root of all our religious denominations is to overlook the very cause that created our modern civilization. What was it that broke up the insipid monotony of the dark ages with its universal empire and a universal church but the divergencies between the beliefs of the Wycliffes, the Luthers, the Galileos, and the popes of Rome? What would America be today if Columbus, or some one like him, had not varied in his belief from the opinions held in common by the rest of his generation? Would New England have had such an illustrious career if the Puritans had continued in the same old way and paid no heed to the matters in which they differed from the established church of England? Take your own Unitarian church. Could it ever have come into existance had not some one like Channing, Parker or Emerson ventured to vary from the Calvinism held in common by most the people of early New England? No, there is not a country nor an institution in a country that does not owe its very being to those ideas which rise above the monotonous level of universal resemblance. Then, too, the very notion of progress presupposes divergence from the level of commonly accepted truths. Please bear in mind I am not speaking of the size of the difference. You may make it as small as you please—so small that the advancing movements may be imperceptible to a causual observer. I am not asking nature to make a leap. Let the change be a smoothly graduated evolutionary process, unaccompanied by catastrophies, revolutions, insurrections and rebellions. Even then I hold that progress can not take place without the emergence of a difference, a variation however slight from the monotony of universal types.

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We need not worry over the universal resemblances then. They are splendidly provided for and are in no danger of being lost. It is the distinctive differences that solicit our attention and loyalty. These are not securely ingrained in the very constitution of this physical world. And what more inspiring conception can we have of our own destiny than that we are here in the world to help determine which of the ideals now possible will finally enter into the make-up of the total world? And if this be so then our first duty is to believe that the differences which divide are supremely important and should not be thrust aside to make room for generally accepted truths, that our various religious denominations and sects, barring out their exclusiveness, are infinitely more significant than any world congress we can ever call together.

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Religious distinctions and differences being thus important it follows that we ought to feel their importance. And the only way we can show that we do feel the importance of any religious belief is by taking its side. Here as elsewhere in our personal lives it is practical conduct that tells in the struggle of existence between the various ideals. But we often excuse ourselves from the unpleasant duty of taking the part of an unpopular belief by saying that after all the test of its truth is in its self-sufficiency and in its ability to stand alone. And since the days when Carlyle discoursed upon heroes and hero-worship we have been coming to believe more and more in the self-sufficiency of great men. We are almost persuaded that in a world where there are such giants as the Shakespeares and the Newtons and the Emersons there can be no possible use for such help as congregations can give. But a moment's reflection reveals what a mistaken notion of the nature of truth this is. There is nothing so helpless as a great truth in its infancy. Read the story of the lives of great men and learn there what have been the trials of transcendent geniuses. And what, pray, was Carlyle's own purpose in discoursing upon heroes? Surely it was not to tell us of the self-sufficiency of heroic souls, for the best way to tell that would have been not to tell it at all. What is absolutely self-sufficient stands in need of no encouragement from an essayist, orator, or a poet. And in praising heroes, it evidently was Carlyle's aim to win sympathy for them. He urged upon us the duty of worshipping our heroes, because he saw how greatly truth needed devout worshippers. Indeed if we carried out this theory that the greater the truth the more self-sufficient it is, we ought to cease worshipping God altogether. To most of us, I trust, God stands for the supreme truth, and if independence increases as greatness increases, then God, the greatest of all, is most independent of all. And if he is absolutly self-sufficient he can derive no strength from our worship. But in the opinion of the most enlightened religious souls, God does derive strength from his loyal worshippers. And it seems to me we ought to renounce this superstition of the self-sufficiency of great truths and great men.

There are many other reasons why we should congregate about those religious ideals that are yet on trial but I have time to mention only one more. We have all observed the readiness with which people take sides, and many of us perhaps have said a good deal at one time or another against this zeal of partizanship. And it is true we all ought to proceed with some caution in this matter. The sides which people take in our political and social life are frequently such narrow sides that a serious

man may be often excused if he becomes disgusted with taking sides at all. The history of religious controversy furnishes many examples of the small sides over which people have fought to the death. But I believe it to be a radical mistake in our disgust with these abuses to repudiate the very notion of taking sides altogether. There are sides so small as to be hardly worth taking at all, let us frankly admit it. But there are also large sides, sides involving great issues and tremendous consequences. And there is not one of us who would be willing to say that such sides are not worth taking. Also the fact that this capacity for taking sides is shared by all from the least to the greatest ought to put our duty of exercising it in a very solemn light. While the origin of distinctions and differences which constitute the essence of all great religious issues are beyond our control their destiny is within our power. We hold the future of religion pretty much in our own hands and we hold it, too, by virtue of the capacity for taking sides. It is at this point that we can make our influence tell even in the counsel of the gods. Herein lies the creative power of every human being, the power over the destiny of any religious faith, the power of forming or not forming a religious environment, the power of congregating about a religious truth and preserving it or the power of refusing to congregate and thereby destroying it. It is nothing less than the power of life and death, this power of the congregation.

Most of you here I take it bear the Unitarian name. See to it, then, that this name shall stand for a distinct and definite religious principle and not for some general universal resemblance obtaining between all created things. And, to this end, be not deceived by some possible modern etymological implications of the word Unitarian. There is now a strong tendency to use the word to signify the principle of unity in all things, "the unity of God, the oneness of the universe and the solidarity of the human race." But this was not its meaning when the foundations of the denomination were laid. Then the word stood for logical consistency in thinking. It was a word of protest against the obvious contradiction of saying that one personal God was also three persons. It affirmed what all plain people now believe that God cannot be in one respect one thing and in the same respect and at the same time three things. We should also remember that our modern theories of unity and identity were unknown to Channing and his contemporaries and that it would have been impossible for them to understand the word as some would have us understand it today.

Finally in reading the works of our ancient worthies, such

as Channing, Parker, Emerson and Clarke, let us search out those things in which these great preachers differed from the commonly accepted opinions of their own day. Let us try to imagine the nature of the changes they wrought in the religious beliefs of their own generation. And then having thus grasped the distinctive principle which lies at the root of the Unitarian faith, let us develop it by examples and illustrations taken from the living present. And most of all let us see to it that in our own private personal lives we shall be always loyal to every principle we profess.

THE DOVER DECREE—A CORRECTION.

By James W. Bartlett.

To the Editor of Universal Religion:—

In your issue of December, 1903, the Memorial number in honor of the late Dr. Francis E. Abbot, I notice a few errors, one of them important in regard to the cause of religious liberty.

You say of the injunction on the Unitarian church in Dover, N. H., "This decree, sad to relate, has never been repealed. It is in full force today, and in open violation of that decree a succession of ministers has occupied the Dover pulpit and at least one has preached precisely such doctrines as Dr. Abbot was forbidden to preach."

Dr. Duren J. H. Ward, to whom undoubtedly you refer, occupied that pulpit some months before he found out that an injunction was on the church. Neither the Unitarian Association which sent him to Dover, nor the society to whom he ministered informed him of the fact. The latter had looked on the decree for a long time as a "dead letter." Not so Mr. Ward. He immediately began to interest the society to take steps to have the injunction removed, and succeeded. It was removed by order of the Supreme Court of New Hampshire, some five years ago.

You are right in regard to Mr. Abbot's first resignation, but are somewhat in error about the circumstances of the second. Mr. Abbot stated to his people that for a long time he had been studying the claim of the Evangelicals that Jesus was the Christ and Messiah and had decided that they were right, but that he could not accept their views. So he was no longer a Christian and therefore could no longer preach to a Unitarian Christian Society, and then and there resigned.

Many of his friends could not understand why he should not preach to Unitarians if they so wished and knew where he stood, but he felt that it would stultify himself and compromise

his position. Mr. Abbot wanted the society to drop its Unitarian name and take an independent stand outside of all creeds, but the majority of his friends, who were also a majority in the church, felt that step would be an injustice to a large minority who had been associated with that church for many years. Then an Independent Society was formed, which did not attempt to control the church edifice to the exclusion of the minority, but held its meeting in the afternoon, the Unitarian church having for years held its service only in the morning.

The Independent Society held rather an anomalous position in that its leading members were not really independent but were mixed up with the Unitarian Society. Mr. Abbot not knowing that, went back and preached about three months to, as he supposed, an Independent organization, until he discovered, from the result of a parish meeting that he had been preaching to, and was paid by the radical wing of the Unitarian parish. He immediately resigned and utterly refused to again preach in or enter that pulpit on any consideration whatsoever. The week following Mr. Abbot's absolute refusal to longer remain, the minority of the Unitarian Society took steps toward asking for an injunction, against his preaching in this pulpit.

The injunction was asked by the minority against the majority of the Unitarian Society, not against an Independent Society. The majority, the defendants in the suit, did not win the law suit and did not keep the building.

Some of the officers of the new Independent Society were induced by the attorney for the defendants to try to conceal the fact of a new society having been formed, foolishly thinking it would hurt their cause.

The incident of the Harvard professorship, to which you allude, illustrates the brave determination to follow the right, and the incorruptible character of Mr. Abbot in his early manhood. Mr. Abbot told me in 1866 before the Syracuse convention "that he had been informed if he would stay away from that convention, or going, if he would not publicly speak on the question of the 'Preamble,' the chair in Harvard was his. He had some time before that been asked if he would accept the Professorship if offered him." He went to that convention feeling it might cost him the fellowship of the Unitarian ministry, and knowing it would cost him the position he ardently wished for, a professorship at Harvard.

Yours very truly,

James W. Bartlett.

Dover, N. H., Feb. 5, 1904.

[We are grateful to our correspondent for his announcement of the removal of the injunction and only wish he had made mention of it to Dr. Abbot at the time. Mr. Bartlett asks us "in the interest of justice to state that the injunction is taken off the church" and adds "it is now as free as any Unitarian Society of Christians." With this request we heartily comply, rejoicing in what has been accomplished by Dr. Ward. We feel persuaded that the Dover church is now as free as Mr. Bartlett informs us it is, yet we feel the day cannot be far distant when the larger, deeper freedom for which Dr. Abbot stood will be represented by the church which he strove to lift to a non-sectarian or cosmopolitan level. Regarding the law suit and the defendants in the case, we are glad to present Mr. Bartlett's statement, but what we said in our memorial address was taken directly from an autobiographical sketch written by Dr. Abbot at our request in 1896.—Ed.]

THE NOBLER PART.

To follow after what you deem the right,
To live according to your Highest Light,
For freedom and humanity to fight,
To dare speak out the thoughts within your heart,
To persevere, despite the sneers of fools,
To speak, despite the isms and the schools,
To stand for Truth, despite accepted rules,
This is the Nobler Part.

EDITORIAL.

WISE MEN FROM THE EAST.

Of late certain Unitarian weather prophets with observatories in eastern cities have ascended their respective towers once more and ventured upon a fresh forecast of liberal religious conditions on Puget Sound. They predict squalls and tempests, followed by the capsizing of the non-sectarian ships at Tacoma and Seattle. We have no desire to take the role of prophet, nor would we register any boastful claims concerning the staunchness of these ships or the success that has attended their voyages on the sea of human faith and hope and endeavor. We would only suggest that if these prophets are correct the two crews have certain great thoughts with which to console themselves. In the first place, the Cause for which they sail can never be wrecked, for freedom, fellowship, progress, are indestructible spiritual realities and respectively bound up with truth, brotherhood and the Commonwealth of Man, than which there are no higher ends of human life. In the second place, it is infinitely preferable to be alone in our own little boat, true to our colors, than aboard the stateliest

ship that flings a different flag to the breeze; better it is, and nobler, too, to be alone with our ideal than in company with all the world and our ideal dragging in the dust. Finally, it is a source of great consolation to remember that there are other prophetic spirits in the Unitarian denomination who predict the eventual advance of Unitarianism to the level of our strictly free and uncompromised and cosmopolitan position. For that consummation we earnestly wait with these hopeful prophets, assured that with its advent we all will be one, one in the freedom of the intellect, one in the fellowship of the spirit, one in the Universal Life that forever makes all things new.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD.

TACOMA

On the twenty-first of February last, at a special meeting held at the close of the Sunday service the First Free Church of Tacoma voted unanimously to extend to Mr. John W. Roberts a call to become their permanent minister. Mr. Roberts began to preach for the Free Church the first Sunday of last October under a temporary engagement of six months. Although the undertaking was a hazardous one both for the church and Mr. Roberts nevertheless it succeeded so well that at the end of four months the board of trustees recommended Mr. Roberts' temporary engagement to be commuted into a permanent one. At the close of his discourse Sunday morning February twenty-seventh Mr. Roberts read the following letter:—

Tacoma, Wash., February 25, 1904.

Rev. John W. Roberts,
121 South G St.,
Tacoma, Wash.

My dear Mr. Roberts,

I take great pleasure in informing you that at a meeting of the members of the First Free Church of Tacoma, held after the service on Sunday, February 21, 1904, a resolution was unanimously adopted extending to you a call to continue indefinitely as the minister of the First Free Church of Tacoma.

Yours very sincerely,
Walter Loveday.
Secretary.

After reviewing briefly his unique experience as the temporary supply of a pulpit made famous by the ten years ministry of Mr. Martin, Mr. Roberts concluded as follows: "In respond-

ing to your call to become the permanent minister of this church involving as this does the commuting of my temporary engagement of six months into an indefinite one, I must put on record my deep appreciation of the confidence you have now placed in me. I came to you on the first of October last with nervous powers necessarily somewhat impaired by the trials and struggles through which I passed in solving my religious problems. I was fully aware that I could not do myself justice and asked for an extension of time. But Mr. Martin felt that the situation here was critical and could no longer be postponed. So I acceded to his request fully realizing the disadvantages involved in taking such a step. But the step has had its advantages also. Both Mrs. Roberts and myself have begun at a pace which we feel sure we can continue. We have resorted to no artificialities to win your esteem and trust that through service in the future this esteem will be strengthened. In accepting the sacred trust which you now commit to my charge may I remind you that after all faith is to be our foundation as a church, faith in a future yet to be realized, faith in what we may become and not in what we are. With such a foundation we shall become true creators making the weak strong, transforming failure into success, thus saving souls and redeeming our own day and generation. It is the tradition of Channing we wish here to perpetuate and as now on the coast of the Atlantic there is a monument dedicated to that illustrious champion of religious freedom so let us see to it that here on the Pacific there shall be erected a monument worthy of the beloved founder of this First Free Church of Tacoma."

On the twenty-ninth of February the following communication was forwarded to the board of trustees:

Walter Loveday, Esq.,
Secretary of the Board of Trustees.
My Dear Mr. Loveday:

I herewith forward you my formal acceptance of the call so kindly extended me "to continue indefinitely as the minister of the First Free Church of Tacoma." Please express to the board of trustees my sincere appreciation of their confidence in committing to my charge so sacred a trust. It shall be my aim to become fully informed concerning the organization and its resources, and I venture to believe that I can count on the hearty co-operation of all the trustees in placing at my disposal all the facts essential to the formulation of wise and successful policies.

Very cordially yours,
J. W. Roberts.